The Black Cat

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Ten Cents

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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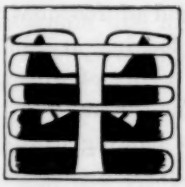
The Fourth Finger.*

BY L. PRINCE



THERE was a stone church upon the corner, surrounded by a wide lawn, and at the sidewalk encircled by a high, iron fence, set in a cement coping. Upon this coping, with his back settled comfortably against the fence, nicely balanced so that each shoulder rested upon a picket, sat a blind beggar with a placard upon his breast from a string around his neck, and a tin cup extended for charity.

This had been his post for many years, and with the sunshine beaming down and warming his body — for he was never on duty when the weather was bad — the blind man secured a quiet happiness from life. His greatest pleasure was forming pictures in his mind of those who passed him on the sidewalk, using his ears as eyes. By much practice he could tell instantly the general aspect of the passers-by: that quick, short tap-tap was the step of my lady on her way to the shops; the much heavier and longer stride was that of her husband; the uncertain, shuffling gait of old age was easily discernible; the patter of the light, skipping steps of childhood was as music to the beggar.

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One day, in the early afternoon, the street was unusually quiet and the beggar almost dozed, for it was warm and pleasant. From down the sidewalk there came the sound of approaching footsteps, and the beggar roused himself. This was a heavy man he judged — middle-aged, perhaps, walking with a decision that bespoke a strong will. The beggar wondered if he would recognize his extended cup, for the coins that had rattled there had been few that morning.

The footsteps hesitated before the blind man and the beggar smiled to himself, for he knew that the tin cup was about to receive a donation. And it was so, the coin, of silver, dropping with a merry tinkle that sent a joyous exhilaration to the heart of the blind man, for before anything else he loved the sound of money dropping into his cup.

He waited expectantly for the charitable person to pass on, but the silence of the day was not broken by sound of footsteps. Presently, the beggar knew that the man was looking at him intently, and after a second of wondering why, a sort of dread chill clutched his heart and his breath caught in his throat.

And when this man spoke to him there came a buzzing in his head, and he clutched the bars behind him for support, for it was the voice the coming of which he had awaited for twenty years. In the few following seconds, while he was speechless, his mind reverted to bygone days, and events of the past were reviewed in his brain as if pictures of them had been thrown instantaneously upon a sheet before eyes that could see, yet as clearly as if they had taken place but yesterday.

He remembered himself, a light-hearted lad, one of the most popular of the students in St. Petersburg. Then there was a vision of the girl with the wondrous blue eyes and the glimmering golden hair. And then the secret societies that might have accomplished much for the cause of freedom. But there was another lad who, like himself, loved this lass of the blue eyes and the sun-kissed hair, and, more lucky or worthy, won her. They had been friends, these two, and seemed still to be, but in the heart of one there rankled hate, because of defeat, jealousy, and the other's success.

So he remembered how, at a meeting of the most virulent of the secret societies, he had sat among his comrades, pale of face and

solemn, so that they jibed him because he was so. But when there were blows upon the doors that shattered it and the police were there he, alone, was calm, and retreated to a safe corner until the tumult of combat was over. Many were taken, but some escaped.

And he, the traitor, free the next morning, had visited the lad who had been his friend and rival, to gloat over him with bars between them, and to tell how he would win the girl with the blue eyes. He remembered the horrified surprise of the other and how it had grown to a fury. He had stood in the stone-walled corridor, with his hands grasping the bars of the door of the narrow cell, and he had laughed at the fury of the other. Then, before he knew what had happened, the caged man had slashed at him with a table knife, and the fourth finger of his left hand had been cut off at the second joint. And when he had retreated, nursing the stump of his finger, he had heard the other calling after him that sometime, somewhere, he would find him again, and kill him.

But retribution had come swifter. Somehow, he did not know how, his treason was discovered by those who had escaped. And they had taken a terrible revenge, these former comrades, for with red hot irons they had burnt out his eyes !

But now the voice of the man before the beggar was repeating the question he had asked once before.

" You are blind ? " he said.

The blind man drew himself together. He was almost sure he recognized the voice. In his waiting for it to come he had imagined that it would be just this way, and so he was prepared.

" You see this sign," he mumbled, indicating it upon his breast. " I thank you for your charity, stranger."

" Stranger ? "

" I do not know — I am blind."

" May I ask your name ? Are you an American ? I hope I do not appear too inquisitive."

" My name is William Darling. Yes, I am an American."

The other was silent, nervously tapping his toe upon the pavement. Presently he sat down upon the coping by the side of the blind man and spoke again.

" It is strange," he said, " but there is something about you that reminds me of a man who was my friend many years ago, even

though you do not resemble him. He was fair of skin, with light-colored hair, quite the antithesis of your raven locks and great beard, for he was clean-shaven. Your left hand, that you keep concealed under your coat — may I see it? A strange request and you look startled. Put it down as a whim and here's another piece of silver for your cup."

But the beggar seemed not to hear the words that were spoken. If he could see he might have been staring intently at something in the distance.

The man by his side laughed coldly.

"No use to hide it now, Peter Siebert," he said. "Oh, I know you! Did you think that dye upon your hair or that great beard, treated likewise, would hide you from my eyes? It is a pity you could not grow another finger, for your hand was not concealed when I first glanced your way, and so I recognized you."

The beggar's body huddled between the iron pickets of the fence. He knew that he was recognized and he felt a faintness come over him. The hand that held the tin cup trembled so that the money in it rattled.

"You have named me right, Ivan Kesheleff," said the beggar. "I am Peter Siebert, or what was that man."

"So! I have something here that belongs to you, and no doubt you will be glad to possess it again. Your finger, that I have treasured so carefully since the day we last met, is what I speak about."

He dropped the bones into the tin cup.

The blind man shuddered and flung the contents of the cup from him, so that the bones of the finger rolled into the gutter and the coins flew in every direction. Some kind-hearted people who were passing at that moment, thinking it an accident, stopped to return the coins to the beggar. One man glared indignantly at the blind man's companion because he made no motion to help pick up the money.

And presently, when the people had passed, Ivan Kesheleff spoke again: "Do you know what I'm going to do, now that I've found you?" he said.

The other was silent.

"No? Do you think I have searched the world for the pleasure of looking upon your face?" The voice was deep with suppressed passion. Then he laughed. "No, I came to kill you, Peter Siebert!"

The begger shivered involuntarily and edged away a trifle from the other. "You want revenge, even now?" he asked.

"Now? You put accent upon the word. Why not now, after the hate that was born has grown so great since these many years have passed?"

"Because you find me but half a man — with sightless eyes. Life? — what is it to me? Don't you think I'd rather die than live always like this?"

The beggar's voice had sincerity in it, yet it was but the mocking of what he had practised years to say. If these words had come from his lips at the time when he was first blinded there might have been some truth in them, but now life had grown sweeter and the thought of death was unbearable. He knew it was useless to appeal for mercy, for he had read the man by his voice well enough to know that there was no chance for that. His purpose was to convince the other that the better revenge would be to permit him to live in blindness.

Neither man spoke for a little space and then it was the blind man who broke the silence.

"Evening is approaching," he said, "for I feel the warmth of the sun leaving my body. It is my time for deserting this corner. Perhaps it is best that you are cheated of your revenge, for surely enough harm and unhappiness has already been done. Will you permit me to say that I am sorry for the past — not for my own self, but for the evil that has come to others?"

He made as if to rise, but the other checked him with outstretched hand, and a nauseating fear rose within him. But outwardly he did not flinch, not even when the man by his side laughed with horrible mirthlessness.

"Not so fast," said Ivan Kesheleff. "You are a good actor, Peter Siebert, even as you were in your younger days, but I can read you better now. Life still holds some music for you, and I will silence that."

The beggar leaned faintly against the iron pickets, a trembling

hand fumbling at his beard. He could imagine the inevitable set of Ivan Kesheleff's mouth and the hate that burned in his eyes.

"You will murder me, then?" he asked, with irregularly uttered words.

"Even so, Peter Siebert."

There was a pause of a few seconds and then the beggar spoke again:

"You have a — a knife?" he asked.

"Yes — I have treasured it for many years. I have my fingers upon it under my coat and I assure you it is a beautiful blade, of finest steel, long and slender and delicately pointed, so as to draw little blood. I had it fashioned for its purpose and it will answer well."

"You think to frighten me," said Peter Siebert, and he straightened his back, though it required a mighty effort to appear without fear. "I will not cringe before you, Ivan Kesheleff. Nor do I ask mercy of you, no more than I would squeeze granite in an effort to get water from it. See, I do not shrink from you!"

He waited for the thrust of the steel, but it did not come, and he could not hear a sound from the man by his side. The silence continued for a space that seemed an age to the beggar.

"Are you there, Ivan Kesheleff?" he asked at last.

"Yes, I am here."

"Then why do you not strike?"

"I have the blade between my fingers and I but meditate upon my revenge, growing the sweeter with each passing second. I would that I could have company, for you will remember that I was always a free-handed fellow, and I would like to share my pleasure. Do you think these careless citizens, hurrying home after a day's work, would rejoice with me in my revenge?"

But the beggar would not answer, and Ivan Kesheleff laughed that horrible laugh that sent a shiver down the spine of the blind man.

"Presently," said Ivan, "presently, I will kill you."

The beggar sat very still. His ear was trained in terrible an-

ticipation toward his companion and every sound by his side sent a quaking fear to his heart that his last moment had come.

The twilight was deepening into night, but the beggar did not feel the chill of the air, so intent was he in his anticipation of death. The toilers hurrying home sent curious glances toward the strange pair sitting side by side upon the coping. The beggar's tin cup lay neglected at his feet, for he had forgotten that he was a beggar. He sat hunched forward upon the edge of his seat, something peculiarly alert and expectant in his appearance. Several times he turned his head to the left, as if in vain effort to pierce the cloud that obscured his vision so as to see his companion, and each time that he did so Ivan Kesheleff laughed.

Soon the stars came out in the heavens and the bustle of traffic died away until only an occasional footfall broke the silence of the night. The hours that passed were terrible ones for the beggar. For a time his body was entirely motionless, listening for a sound from the man by his side, but soon his hands began to fidget nervously and, although he was cognizant of this and endeavored to stop, he could not keep still. And before long this nervousness became more violent, until it grew into a frenzy, culminating in a useless blind attack upon Ivan Kesheleff. The blind man's hands grasped for the throat of his tormentor and found it, only to be shaken off, for his arms, long unused to exercise, were weak. He was thrust back violently, his head striking the iron pickets of the fence.

So he sat passive again, hardly aware of the dull pain in the back of his head, waiting for the thrust of the knife already so long delayed. And when the silence grew unbearable each time he would cry out, "Are you there, Ivan Kesheleff?"

And always the answer would be a mirthless laugh and the words, "Yes, I am here, Peter Siebert!"

From time to time — it seemed an age of interval to the beggar — the bell in the church tower boomed the hour, and each time the sound caused him to start and almost wrung an exclamation from his lips, so high was the tension his nerves endured.

Once he heard footsteps approaching and hoped that the person would pass. The steady tread came nearer and the beggar wanted to cry out, but the thought that it would be his last ut-

tered word checked him. It was a patrolman on his round. His footsteps passed and then died away in the distance.

At last the blind man was sure that he heard a motion toward him by the man at his side. His hands clenched and he felt the blood mount to his head. Then the breath of Ivan Kesheleff was upon his face — an arm jostled him. There was a muttered exclamation from the other. The beggar cried out shrilly, for he had felt the point of the knife over his heart, and then he fainted.

It was not long before he came to, and when he did so he thought at first that he had passed through the valley of death. In his present life he had often wondered about his future and whether his eyes would be blessed with sight when he should awake in the unknown. But he was still blind, the hard coping was under him, and he felt the iron pickets in his back.

"Are you there, Ivan Kesheleff?" he cried when he realized that he lived.

No answering voice broke the stillness of the night. A sob shook the form of the beggar, and then it caught in his throat and he started upright, a sweat breaking out upon his body with that same fear that had overpowered him before he lost consciousness, for he had heard that awful laugh of his relentless companion.

And again Peter Siebert suffered as he had suffered before, awaiting the coming of death. At last again there came the touch of the steel over his heart, yet so lightly as not even to prick the skin. Ivan Kesheleff saw the beggar sink back unconscious against the bars a second time.

He waited patiently for his victim to regain consciousness, but in vain. At last, something in the huddled figure warning him, he grasped it by the shoulders and shook it roughly. But it would not awake. He placed a hand over his enemy's heart, and then, with a startled cry, he walked hurriedly away from the spot, for Peter Siebert was dead.

And next morning the body was found upon the coping as he had left it. There was no sign of violence — not a scratch of the skin — and the reported cause of the death was heart disease.

Doodle's Discovery.*

BY HAROLD KINSABBY.

JOHN JEFFERSON DOODLE derived a large amount of pleasure from the knowledge that he was considered a crank. In Doodle's opinion cranks were persons who, knowing the right way, refused to have things done in any other. John Jefferson demanded full value for his own money and persisted in giving the same in return for the money of others. Business back-steps, fool fakery, and lame excuses were foreign to his methods, so when he opened his restaurant success was assured. Doodle's was the most up-to-date café in the entire eating zone. The food, service and appointments were of the best, and from the opening day the future prosperity of Doodle was something that a fifth-rate prophet could foretell without running the risk of a headache.

But Doodle's Café was in the direct line of a trouble cyclone. In the washrooms connected with the establishment the proprietor supplied the finest toilet soap that money could buy, but unfortunately for the peace of mind of John Jefferson he was called upon to supply much more than legitimate demands required. Expensive soap proved a tempting bait to unprincipled patrons, and Doodle soon discovered that something like forty dollars' worth of soap was removed to meet the daily demands of his six hundred patrons. Legitimate hand-washing could not possibly be responsible for this enormous outlay, so Doodle set his brain the task of devising a plan by which the thieves could be detected.

As all the world knows, various ingenious schemes have been tried with the object of protecting the soap in the washrooms of hotels and restaurants. The cakes have been chained to the wash-stands, for example, only to be cut away by well-to-do people

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who take things as they come. Again, hotel proprietors have put up liquid soap in fixed contrivances, but the kleptomaniacs outwitted the vigilance of the worried owners. The soap was carried away in bottles, and the unfortunate proprietors, finding it impossible to circumvent the ingenuity of the thieves, furnished common soap in large quantities as the only means of lessening their loss.

But Doodle continued to buy the finest toilet soap that was on the market, and he was determined that no thief would make him change his methods. On this account he set his wits to work and Doodle's Soap Thief Detector was the result.

The café owner was in rapture over his invention. Its ability to do all that he claimed for it was beyond question. He had it patented, fitted to the wash-stands, and then awaited results.

The Detector was a simple contrivance. It consisted of a small kodak-like arrangement concealed behind the mirror that hung above each wash-bowl, the eye of the camera being hidden among the electric light fixtures. The picture-taking device was connected with the soap tray in such a manner that a person lifting the soap relieved the pressure upon a button in the bottom of the tray and was by this means immediately photographed by the unseen instrument. When the soap was replaced a self-developing film was moved up in readiness to snap the next person who lifted the tablet, but if it was not replaced the photographic apparatus stopped working and the picture of the soap thief was, therefore, the last on the film.

Doodle gave orders to his staff to immediately report to him when they found a cake of soap missing from its tray, and on the first day he waited anxiously. John Jefferson had philanthropic ideas and he considered the exposure of a soap thief an act for the benefit of the community. He had not long to wait. Dinner had scarcely been served when a cake of soap was reported missing and the proprietor immediately stepped to the washroom and took the film from its place of concealment. The last snapshot was that of a well-dressed middle-aged man, and Doodle, with the long film in his hand, walked down the big dining-room in search of the original. At the very last table he found his man, and, leaning over, addressed him.

"Pardon me," he said, quietly, touching an overcoat that hung near the customer, "is this your overcoat?"

The diner nodded.

"Then," continued John Jefferson, "will you kindly take out of the pocket the cake of soap you took from the wash-stand a few moments ago?"

The accused man grew red in the face and indignant, but Doodle was persistent.

"Very well," he said, when the customer refused to comply with the request, "I will take it out myself. It belongs to me."

He inserted his hand in the pocket of the overcoat and drew forth the missing soap wrapped in one of the small hand towels also belonging to the establishment.

"As I thought," commented Doodle. "A wet piece of soap calls for a dry wrapper, and I suffer doubly. Now, sir, you had better keep quiet. I have the picture of the fellow who took the soap, and that picture is yours." He pushed the film before the eyes of the astonished diner and that person immediately grabbed his hat and coat, paid his check, and fled.

The Thief Detector did good work on its first day. Twenty-seven prominent citizens were among those detected, and the machine finished up the day's work by photographing the mayor of the city, who was accompanied by three ladies. The official blustered when Doodle made the accusation, but, like the others, was forced into a corner when confronted with the tell-tale film, and he drew a cake of soap from his pocket when the proprietor threatened to call an officer.

In ten days Doodle had recovered thirteen hundred and eleven cakes of soap, or, more correctly speaking, he had recovered several cakes thirteen hundred and eleven times from the same number of soap thieves, who were ignorant of the fact that their theft had been recorded by the unseen instrument. And in no single instance had the Detector made a mistake.

But Doodle found that the detection of soap thieves was a costly business. The thirteen hundred and eleven customers detected in the act of purloining the cakes of soap did not return, and each day made matters worse. The Detector's average decreased as the patrons fell away, but each day it scored its victims.

And Doodle was determined. He had made up his mind that he would not allow a man who paid seventy-five cents for a dinner to carry off forty cents' worth of soap, and the moment the machine registered a thief John Jefferson lost no time in making the accusation and recovering the stolen property.

On the twenty-fifth day after the installation of the invention Doodle had but ten customers to dinner, and before the meal was over John Jefferson Doodle retired to his office, and throwing himself into a chair spent some two hours in considering the situation. He then arose and acted with sudden energy. He dictated a lengthy telegram and after seeing that it was immediately dispatched, he drafted a circular and had it typewritten. Then, with a satisfied expression upon his face, he sat down and awaited events.

And he had not long to wait. Two hours after the dispatch of the wire a fat man walked into the dining-rooms and asked for the proprietor. John Jefferson inclined his head and motioned the stranger to a seat.

"I am the president of the International Toilet Soap Trust," said the newcomer eagerly, "and I came in response to your peculiar telegram. It is a trifle vague, and we want more information regarding the matter you mentioned."

John Jefferson Doodle stood up, and without speaking led the way to the washroom. With a grim smile upon his face he explained the mechanism of the Soap Thief Detector to the president of the International Toilet Soap Trust, and the fat man breathed heavily.

"There is nothing vague about this," sneered Doodle. "What I wired you is the truth. Nine out of every ten people who steal soap from hotels and restaurants never buy toilet soap. Therefore, the more thieving the more soap you sell, and it stands to reason that you do not wish the Thief Detector to come into general use."

"Into general use?" queried the visitor.

"Yes," snapped Doodle. "I'm going to have this circular printed, which tells the whole story in plain language. If every hotel, café, and boarding-house uses one — but, there, read it, and then I'll talk terms with you."

The president of the International Toilet Soap Trust leaned back in his chair and read the document, then he did some rapid figuring on the back of an envelope.

"What are your terms?" he asked sullenly.

"A quarter of a million for all rights," cried Doodle. "If you don't want it I guess that every member of the Hotel, Restaurant and Boarding House Union will feel glad when they get my circular. There are over two hundred thousand members, and the trifling sum of five dollars a head will yield me over a million."

The other stood silent for a moment, regarding the face of John Jefferson with his keen gray eyes.

"I couldn't do it on my own responsibility," he said at last.

"Get busy on the long-distance 'phone," suggested Doodle. "Call a special meeting of directors and explain matters, and I'll await the decision. If your people don't buy, I'll promise you that the Great Soap Thief Detector will be known from Mindanao to Baffin's Bay inside three months."

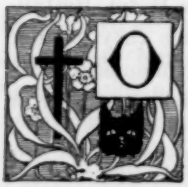
Three hours afterwards the fat man returned, and picking up a pen he wrote a check in favor of Doodle for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which he exchanged for a deed, conveying all rights in the Detector. He then stepped into the washroom, tore the picture machine from its hiding place, disconnected the wires leading to the soap tray, and ripped the film into a thousand pieces.

"I've seen enough of that thing," he growled angrily. "'Cleanliness is next to Godliness,' and the man who stops another man from stealing soap is running pretty near the sin line, I take it."

Then, with a final snort of disgust, he went out into the street, and the doors of Doodle's Famous Dining-rooms were closed. Doodle the Crank was happy and — rich.

The Lie God Forgave.*

BY SUSAN KEATING GLASPELL.



F course — git up there, Adam ! — there's nothing good you can say about him, and no use pretending there is. Nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand there's something good you can find out about a man to put in his funeral sermon, but you'd have pretty hard work hearin' anything good about Charlie Stacey round this country. Looks like we might have snow 'fore night."

"It's pretty hard to believe," said the young minister, a trifle sharply, "that there's any human being about whom *something* good cannot be said."

"I admitted it wasn't the usual thing," commented the old farmer dryly. "Git up there, Adam !"

"You see," he resumed, when they were about half way up the long hill, "you've only been here six months, and I've been here since the day Charlie Stacey was born — yes, and long before that. Our place and the Stacey place joins, and all I can say is that if there was anything good about Charlie Stacey that thing somehow missed my observation. Gettin' pretty windy, ain't it?"

"If there is nothing good to be said about the dead," said the minister, striving not to speak hotly, "we can at least show them the courtesy of saying nothing at all. There is something — oh, it doesn't seem just square to speak against any man — no matter how big a villain — after he has lost the power to defend himself."

"That sounds well and good," agreed David Lowery. "I'm not saying these things generally. Generally speaking, I'm saying nothing at all. But I was just trying to make you understand that in preaching the funeral sermon of Charlie Stacey you've got no easy job on your hands."

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Stuart Linwood knew that was true enough. When word had come to him the day before that Charlie Stacey had been killed in a drunken brawl, and that it was requested he conduct the funeral services out at the Stacey place the following day, he knew at once that he was to get his first real taste of the hardships of his profession. Charlie Stacey was the village tough. He was leader of the crowd which occupied the chairs in front of the saloon and commented on the passers by. The young minister, who knew a thing or two of the world, and of human nature, had been quick to see that Stacey was not what might be called a good, square tough. He had a sullen, tricky kind of face, which made one feel that even his best friends might become his prey. He was a young fellow, younger than the minister himself, but for so long a time the phrase "as bad as Charlie Stacey" had been current around there that the length of his record seemed to add to the number of his years. The minister had stopped him on the street one day and asked him, jovially as he could, if he wouldn't drop in some time and see what they were doing up at the church, and Charlie Stacey had replied with a swagger and a leer that it would be a cold day when they got him at any such show as that.

"He was mean from the time he was able to walk," went on David Lowery. "It's not a case of a high-spirited young fellow bein' led astray. He was just born bad, and it's hard to figure that out, too, when you consider that his father and his grandfather before him were deacons in the church, and that his mother is as good a woman as ever lived, and come of good stock at that. The two oldest boys has got farms of their own now. Josie — that's the girl, married Joe Free, one of our best young farmers 'round here, and Will — he's two years younger than Charlie — is a good, steady young fellow who stays home and looks after the farm. Seems like Charlie got all the meanness of the family. Git up there, Adam!"

"How much farther have we to go?" asked the minister.

"Only two miles more — git up, Adam! They call the Stacey place seven miles from town, and this school house here is the five-mile point."

They jogged along for some time in silence. The minister was anxious that the long drive come to an end. It was not that he

minded the raw wind, but something in the companionship of David Lowery irritated him. And yet he knew the old farmer was spoken of as one of the best men of the community.

The Iowa farms, stripped of their substance, had a forbidding look that November afternoon. The leaves had fallen from the trees, and there was a bareness in everything. There was something in the bleak stretches more chilling even than the strong east wind. Stuart Linwood wished with all his heart that the afternoon was well over, and that he was back in his little study at home.

They turned a corner, and a long, straight road stretched out before them. "That's the Stacey barn," said the farmer, pointing with his whip, "and the house is just beyond."

The young minister was growing very nervous. He felt he would rather face a large city congregation than get up before that handful of country people and say something about Charlie Stacey.

"How does his mother feel about it?" he asked, suddenly.

"She ain't got nothing to say."

He turned to his companion inquiringly. "Just what do you mean by that? Do you mean she doesn't care? — or that she is crushed?"

"Well, for a long time Mary Stacey tried to cover up Charlie's meanness. She was always making excuses to the neighbors for the low tricks he played on them. She'd say that his pa didn't understand him — she'd say anything she could think of. Some of the excuses she made was pretty senseless. But when he got to carryin' on so in town, and it was known all over the country that he was a general disgrace to his family and the community, why then she couldn't think of anything more to say, and so she just kept still. Of late years she never mentioned him to the neighbors, and when they spoke of him to her she'd give them to understand it would be more agreeable to talk about something else. So far as I know, she hasn't said one word about his bein' killed in a saloon. She just goes round making preparations, and saying nothing at all. Now, Josie and the boys is more outspoken. They don't hesitate to say they're outraged and disgraced, and they don't know what they've done that this blow

should come on them. Everybody round here feels great sympathy for Josie and the boys. But Mary Stacey — I've known her all my life — don't seem to want no sympathy. I must say she's actin' queer."

The minister started to say something, and then closed his mouth tightly. "I never noticed until last night," went on the farmer, "how fast she has aged. She's not a day over sixty, but last night, after they'd brought Charlie home and she was puttin' the finishing touches to him — she tied his necktie over again, and combed his hair — why, it just struck me all in a heap that she was an old woman. I started to say something to her about the cross she had to bear, but she broke right in and asked me if I'd mind fetchin' you out today. Well, here we are, and I don't suppose you're sorry. It's turned raw in the last hour. Hope it won't snow 'till the funeral's over."

Within was the sombre excitement, the kind of hushed bustle characteristic of such an occasion. It was within an hour of the time set for the funeral, and many of the neighbors had come early to "help." They stood stiffly around in the dining-room and sitting-room, whispering to one another. To the young minister there was about them all a look of having come because they felt it their duty to do so. Their mien seemed to be saying — what he was sure they were saying to one another in words — that they wished to show the proper spirit and give a decent burial to even Charlie Stacey. Josie and the boys were meeting newcomers at the door, and he was somewhat surprised to find himself resenting their looks of grieved resignation.

He had been there only a few minutes when Mrs. Stacey came in from the kitchen and spoke to him. The woman's face was hard to fathom. She spoke very quietly, almost coldly, and yet, despite the homely dignity of her voice and bearing, there was a hunted look in her eyes, and about her mouth a kind of wistfulness — a something which caused a tightening in the young minister's throat. He found, after a minute, that she was looking at him strangely. He could not forget the look, and after she had turned away, it came to him that it was a look of appeal.

Josie and one of the boys ate dinner with him. They spoke freely of their brother, of how great a trial he had been, and of

how they did not know why this blow had come to them. Something about them irritated him, and when Josie advanced the idea that perhaps it was the hand of God took Charlie before worse calamities could come, the Reverend Stuart Linwood was moved by an altogether unclerical desire to throw a plate at her. He knew they were disappointed in his not saying comforting things about the bearing of their cross. The giving of professional sympathy, just because it was expected, was one of his hardest duties, and he always found it difficult to talk with people about their crosses when he felt they were taking a pious satisfaction in the bearing of them.

He was sitting in the big rocking-chair in the sitting-room when Mrs. Stacey came up and spoke to him. In spite of the bent shoulders, the wan face, and the tightly pulled-back iron-gray hair, there was something gave a strange dignity, a kind of queenliness to the spare, unlovely figure. "It will soon be time to begin," she said. "If you will come in the front room with me now you can see him."

He barely repressed a start of surprise. He knew that what she suggested was the custom at funerals around there, but he had not thought of it in connection with this one. As she walked ahead of him and opened the parlor door, his eyes grew a little dim. He was quick to see the pathos in her demanding for Charlie those formalities of respect she had many times seen enacted for others.

Her dignity did not fail her. As she pulled back the cloth and exposed the face which in death bore plainly the stamp of the life the boy had led, she gave no sign, by word, look, or move that there was any incongruity, any need of explanation, in what she did. It was the hardest moment Stuart Linwood had ever known. He knew it was deemed fitting at such times to say something of the dead, but he looked down into the dissipated, heavy face before him with an utter helplessness. Something told him she would not care for platitudes or professional condolence, and he knew of nothing else to offer.

He was sure she felt his embarrassment, for after a minute she said, a little haughtily: "You notice what beautiful hair he has, Brother Linwood?"

"Yes, indeed," said the minister, eagerly, "It's beautiful hair."

"He had the prettiest hair of any of my babies. It was beautiful before he was a month old."

"I'm sure he must have been a very pretty baby," said the minister.

"He was," she answered, quietly.

There was another hard pause. "He was very fond of apple pie," she resumed, her voice quivering, but charged with a hauteur not free from defiance. "I've never known any one who was as fond of it as he was. And he thought no one could make apple pie right except me. The last time he was out home I made one for him — I always did when he came, and as he got up from the table he said: 'I tell you, Mother, if there was a medal for apple pie, you'd get it sure.'"

The minister could not speak. His throat had tightened up. His hair, and his fondness for her apple pie! But she had fulfilled with dignity the custom of the hour. Something good had been said of Charlie.

When they began upon the opening hymn he was moved by an almost irrepressible desire to turn and run away. He wondered if they knew how plainly they were telling, in the way their hands were folded, the way their mouths were drawn, that they were there, not as mourners, but as men and women doing what they believed their duty. There was but one mourner at that funeral. She sat there between Josie and the boys — her head erect, her face very pale. It was the lines about her eyes which gave some faint idea of the struggle she was making.

At last he rose to speak. He read a few verses of the Scripture, and then he said a few things about how it was one of the laws of the universe that death should come in the midst of life, and of how hard it was to fathom the ways of God. He intended saying very little, and making that little very general. It was when he was about to make his closing remarks that his gaze fell full upon the face of the mother.

She was looking at Charlie's coffin. Something about her — he could not have told what it was — made the minister draw in his breath sharply and lean heavily against the table. He did

not know just what it was the fond mother had expected of him, but he was sure that in some hidden corner of her heart she had — perhaps unknown to herself — nurtured the hope that at the very last there would come something to bring a semblance of the human, bring a little of feeling and of sentiment, to this burial of her Charlie.

And in her folded hands and despairing face he read the tragedy, the heart-break of it, all anew. He saw, as he had not seen before, how all the years which awaited her would be lightened — glorified — by one good word said of Charlie. She would stand that one good word over against the black years of the boy's life, and by the mystic logic of a mother's heart would some way make that little crumb of goodness outweigh the sodden mass of bad. About one good word she would weave an ideal and build up a memory. Little by little the hateful things would slip away, and there would remain only that one thing — enlarged, illumined, all-pervading. With a deep, warm rush of feeling it came to the young minister that, night after night, this mother had lain awake thinking of and praying for Charlie. He remembered what David Lowery had said of the persistence with which she made excuses to the neighbors. And then, when driven to bay, when it had grown beyond all hope of talking it away, how glorious had been the pride — the courage — of her silence!

The resolution to do it swept over him all in an instant. It came overwhelmingly, with a force not to be turned aside, with a clearness of insight not to be questioned. He had ever been a passionate lover of truth, but, standing there now in the presence of that lonely, hungering, defeated soul, filled with a consciousness of the fight she had made, and with an appreciation of the barrenness that was before her, it came to the young minister, came as a voice from God himself, that a lie which was poured as balm upon a breaking heart could not greatly offend even the spirit of truth.

It was strange how it all formulated itself for him. He did not think out the thing he would say. It simply rushed in upon him, and he could no more have desisted now from uttering it than he could have stopped the fast falling of the snow in the world without.

"My friends," he began, folding his hands behind him and taking a step forward, "I have decided at the last minute that I will say something which I had intended to hold back."

The mother shot a frightened glance from the speaker to the coffin of Charlie, as though she would guard against any ill word the one who was sleeping there. She was quivering as an animal quivers when, after a long chase, it sees its pursuers closing in about it. The rest of them were leaning a little expectantly forward. He was going to speak now — they thought — of the life of Charlie Stacey. He felt it his duty — probably — to draw a lesson from the awful example.

"I have not lived in this community a long time," he went on, "but I think perhaps I knew Charlie Stacey better than you who have been his neighbors for many years."

He said it slowly, and a curious look overspread the faces of the listeners. The mother turned her gaze from her son's coffin to the minister's face. Doubt and fear and hope were in her look. Her lips were parted. Her breath was coming heavily.

"I had not intended to say it publicly. I thought I would tell it to his mother after this was all over. But I was decided now, in spite of my promise, that I owe it to him to tell you all."

He paused, and no sound broke in upon the stillness save the moaning of the wind about the unprotected farmhouse. The eyes of the young minister swept the little crowd before him, and then turned and rested upon the face of Mary Stacey. Two red spots had burned into her withered cheeks — her head was held high — her hands were clasped tight in her lap. He could feel the awfulness of her tension — that is why he said it so abruptly:

"Charlie Stacey had it in his heart to do better. His better nature was beginning to assert itself. He wanted to lead a different life. I *know* it, because he told me so himself."

Each sentence fell clear-cut and decisive — fell with the force of a blow. Every eye was riveted upon the minister's face, and from the woman who had all her life stood between Charlie Stacey and the world, there came one quick, throbbing cry.

"He came to my study one night just before he died, told me how he hated himself for the evil he had done against his will, and that he wanted me to help him to get away from here where

every one thought of him as bad, and I agreed that would be best."

Mary Stacey had pulled her chair a little closer. The light of a wonderful joy illumined her face. Her clasped hands were stretching themselves out toward the minister. It was as if body and soul were drinking in the long-fought-for and long-denied breath of life. Half rising in her seat, she uttered a strange cry. It was exultant — triumphant, as though a something had burst around her heart and was letting out a flood of feeling. The neighbors were casting startled looks at one another. It was hard for them to credit it, but they were not given to questioning the word of a minister.

"I know that a fight such as he proposed to make does not admit of an easy victory, but I know that in the end Charlie Stacey would have won."

For a minute Stuart Linwood stood there, looking straight ahead. The tumultuous sobs of the mother, the first which had come from her, filled the room. He opened his lips as if to say something more, and then, instead, he turned and walked to the coffin, rested his two hands upon it, and prayed in low, appealing voice:

"O God, who knoweth the hearts as well as the deeds of men, deal in great kindness with the soul of Charlie Stacey. He was cut off before he could fulfil the better promptings of his heart, but we pray that you will reckon with him, Lord, according to what he had it in his heart to do, rather than in accordance with what he had already done. He suffered for his weaknesses, but he hated his sins. And that is why we pray that you will give him the chance in the hereafter to make the fight he was just beginning upon here. Comfort the sorrowing mother today with the thought that her boy, despite the slipping of his feet, had within him the promptings which make for manhood. Take this poor, storm-tossed soul unto thyself, Lord, and deal with it in the love and the mercy and the understanding which ever temper thy justice."

The words died away — the passionate sobs of the mother were stilled — and there was over them all a strange hush. It was out of that hush that there came to the minister, — suddenly, staggeringly — the consciousness that in a prayer to his God, a prayer

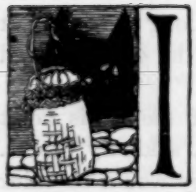
uttered over the dead, he had voiced an absolute lie. Everything swam before him for the minute. And then something drew his eyes to the face of Mary Stacey, and the things he read there took from him forevermore all feeling of guilt. Upon the face which had been frozen with despair there rested now a kind of holy tranquillity. There was about her an uplift — an exultation. There was thankfulness, pride, and joy. The long fight was at an end, and over her worn features was stealing the softening veil of peace.

As he turned from her then to the rest of them his heart warmed to the thought that they were, after all, a kindly people. Their moist eyes and softened faces told that they would be quick to forget the wrongs Charlie Stacey had done them, would be eager to say the boy had never been understood.

And while the November wind piled the snow in fantastic heaps about the old farmhouse that night a woman sat in an upper room fingering a little basket of baby clothes. Charlie seemed to her as pure tonight as in the days when he had worn the little things she held so tenderly in her lap. She had already forgotten all she did not wish to remember. She had come into her heritage of ideals.

Found Gold.*

BY MARK F. WILCOX.



IT did not seem foolhardy for Bradstreet and McClelland to essay the recovery of a six-million-dollar pot of gold that a fleet of five, backed by a powerful syndicate, had failed to obtain. Neither of them was in love, so no Crœsus of a prospective father-in-law compelled them to seek the wherewithal to keep up the family name and a brownstone front. They were simply in search of excitement, and the fact that others had been unsuccessful did not shake their confidence in their own ability to succeed.

The treasure ship *Dorothea* sailed out of Lourenço Marques in November, 1899, and as everybody in South Africa knows, the unlucky vessel was wrecked off the coast of Zululand.

It was on the fifteenth day of July, 1905, that Bradstreet and McClelland, in their eighty-foot turbine yacht, left Durban, where the collapse of the plans of the syndicate filled the newspapers and gave the adventurers their starting impulse.

There followed two days of cruising dangerously close to the Zululand coast. They investigated the Umhlatuzi Shoal, where, according to the reports, three of the syndicate's fleet had been lost in their unsuccessful attempt to recover the gold. The yacht poked a curious nose into the wild cauldron boiling at the southernmost extremity of Cape Vidal, but foul weather stopped further search in that direction. Riders, the captain of the launch, made for the open ocean, and the treasure seekers lost three days in wandering on the Indian.

When at last the wind died down to a zephyr and the sun shone dazzlingly out of a sky that glowed like a blue lamp-shade, the yacht came swiftly back to Cape Vidal, where the buried treasure ship was reported to be. About two o'clock on the twenty-first

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they sighted land, and, after a careful study of the coast, sky and chart, decided that they were about fifty miles above the Cape, and nearly opposite Delagoa Bay. Having shaped their course accordingly, at five, the cape of the seething cauldron loomed into view. From the north it resembled a long brown arm reaching into the sea, the hand treacherously buried except for a few knuckles, but ready to destroy the first victim that came near. Near the upper end, however, where the arm joined the main body of the land, there seemed to be a fissure in the solid expanse of black rock. As the yacht approached, this crevice in the sheer wall developed into the entrance of a small, land-locked harbor, and the adventurers were delighted. But as they passed the frowning headland they were amazed to find that another craft was already in the small harbor.

It was a tugboat, and it lay there calmly as though that mysterious port had always been its berth. It seemed deserted. From the open doorway of the rear cabin to the smoky windows of the pilot house, the newcomers looked in vain for any sign of life. An indefinite thread of smoke floated from the funnel, but it might have been floating there for years, so lifeless did it seem, and yet that scarcely visible thread stirred the blood in the bodies of the newcomers. Riders reached for the whistle cord and sent a hoarse blast ping-ponging among the rocky walls.

The signal stirred the tug. There was an answering shout, and several half-dressed men scrambled out of the cabin and stared sleepily at the new arrivals. One of them, better and more completely clad than the rest, came to the side of the tug and addressed Bradstreet and his partner:

"How do you do, gentlemen," he said, coolly. "I suppose we surprise you as much as you do us, but if you will only wait a minute, I think that everything will be soon explained." Without waiting for an answer, he coolly dropped into a rowboat and came over, leisurely and alone, to the yacht.

As he climbed on to the deck Bradstreet and McClelland had a good view of their visitor. In appearance he resembled the typical stage villain. Round, bullet head, black, bushy eyebrows, long, pointed moustaches and a cynical mouth were all there, while added to these was a large, livid scar upon his left cheek which,

shaped like a capital J and curling towards his nose, gave him a villainous aspect. Such a character confronting the two treasure seekers — with a background of mysterious tugboat, vicious-looking men, and lofty precipices, that threw the whole scene into dark shadow — was suspicious enough, but when he said: "I have been looking for you for some time," Bradstreet and McClelland were as much surprised as if their visitor had informed them that he had built the harbor.

"We are certainly glad to know it," said Bradstreet, with polite sarcasm.

"My name is Garx," continued the man with the pirate-like whiskers. I am the agent of the Evans-Reese Syndicate and have been more or less connected with every unlucky expedition sent out to recover the gold which was lost in these waters. While I was conning the shipping in the bay at Durban the other day, with a view to sending out a last forlorn hope, I discovered your boat. I had never seen anything that looked quite so handy and yet seaworthy, and I knew at once it was what I wanted. I tracked you to your hotel, but there I found you deep in the discussion of the wreck, and planning a venture of your own. I saw that I had come at an inopportune time, for you would suspect me of being a fellow-adventurer and doubt my words as much — well, as much as you do now. I thought, however, that I had plenty of time, and so I waited developments, but consequently I missed you, for that very afternoon I learned that you had gone."

"Did you think you would catch us in that little tugboat?" asked Bradstreet.

"No, not exactly. But I knew of this cove, and I also knew that you would be hanging around this vicinity for a few days, and so, because I was foolish enough to hope that you would join with me, if you only knew the situation, I chartered the tug and started for this place. On account of the storm we had to put out to sea, and did not get in here until this morning. We were all so exhausted with the struggle with the elements that we immediately turned in, not one of us waking up till your whistle roused us. Now then, here is my proposition: If you agree to work with me, you get one hundred thousand pounds sterling."

"We are looking for six millions," remarked McClelland.

"And you will find nothing," retorted Garx. "You do not know where the treasure lies; you do not know the danger that surround it; you do not know how to overcome that danger. Only two men knew all this. One was the pilot of the last expedition, and he is dead; the other is myself. Join with me, and you get a hundred thousand — go without me and you get nothing."

He was very plausible, and yet it struck the two that it was rather strange that he should be there in a tugboat, and McClelland voiced his doubt.

"Pshaw!" interjected Garx. "Did I say there was any danger in this millpond? You mistake me. The danger is not here, but in the gold hunt. You see the gold is not here, nor anywhere near here, not even in the whirlpool the other side of the cape. The Syndicate has led people to think that it was here, in order to keep adventurers off the real grounds. No, the gold is not here! It is at the Umhlatuzi Shoal, and there is where you will find all the danger and adventure that you will care to meet. One hundred thousand is what you will get if you will join with me. Otherwise, I repeat again, you will get nothing, and doubtless will lose your lives and your boat into the bargain."

Garx produced an official-looking envelope from his inside pocket and extracted therefrom a large printed form.

"You see, I am already prepared to make the contract," he remarked. "Sign your names here, and I will send the document home by the tug."

The unexpected, prosaic ending of what promised to be a most romantic episode was a big disappointment to Bradstreet and McClelland. As though the recovery of a treasure that had baffled five ships and their crews was, after all, only a matter of signing their names to a bit of paper! And yet that business-like contract was itself suggestive of mystery and adventure, while the printed form in the name of the Evans-Reese Syndicate spread boldly across the top of the page did more to convince Bradstreet and his partner that the man spoke the truth than his mere verbal protestations. McClelland, after carefully reading the sheet, picked up the pen and put his name to the bottom and without a word Bradstreet followed his example. Their new friend took the signed paper and rowed over to the tugboat, and in a short time

he returned, bringing with him another man, who took the skiff back after Garx came aboard the launch.

While the tugboat was steaming out of the harbor Garx told the two more regarding the conditions that surrounded the recovery of the lost treasure. The spot where it had been lost was just behind a barrier reef of five tooth-like rocks, which at the lowest ebb would be sufficiently uncovered, Garx thought, to permit of the recovery of the gold.

They consulted an almanac and found that the ebb would not be at its lowest for nine days, but instead of returning to Durban, they decided to spend the interim at the Cape. This was a suggestion of Garx, and it seemed reasonable enough, as a return to the city would involve two trips along a dangerous coast, besides a good deal of unnecessary publicity at the metropolis. Furthermore, Bradstreet and McClelland found the bush back of the Cape teeming with game, and they, in company with Riders, the captain of the launch, went out hunting every day. But Garx and Williams, the cook, stayed aboard the boat.

Bradstreet and McClelland found nothing in the actions of Garx to arouse their suspicions. He seemed to be consistently full of business and books, and much preferred lying on the promontory, reading from a little collection of novels that the launch carried, to tramping over the rugged country after game. Williams, on the other hand, said that he had a defect of vision and could not shoot, but he made himself useful in looking after the game that was daily gathered by the three hunters. They did not dream that Garx would take the man into his confidence and use him in any scheme that he was planning against them. There was nothing in common between the two. Garx was an educated man, despite his appearance, while Williams was an ignorant cook. The latter called himself a Frenchman, but with his broken English, his greasy black hair and his goatee, he seemed more like a Mexican or a Spaniard.

Not until the sixth day of their stay at Cape Vidal did Bradstreet, McClelland and Riders learn how closely the two men had been drawn together. Even then it was only by the veriest slip of chance that they discovered the plot when it was already well hatched and working.

The three had started early that morning on the most portentous hunt they had yet attempted. Some natives had reported the presence of rhinoceri about fifteen miles inland at the head of St. Lucia Lake, and they intended to make a two days' trip in an endeavor to secure the hide of one of these great beasts. As usual, Garx and Williams stayed aboard the boat. They were about three miles from the cove when they discovered that no one had brought a field-glass. Bradstreet wanted to return, but McClelland found that a nail had developed a disagreeable point in the sole of his boot, and he took the opportunity of returning to the boat and changing his shoes. He left his companions waiting under a syringa tree with the understanding that they would remain there until he returned.

Within an hour McClelland reached the Cape. As he climbed down the steep, narrow steps that they had cut in the side of the cliff, he was surprised to find that the yacht had been taken from her moorings and was now anchored less than ten feet from the shore, with a gang-plank connecting it to the beach. McClelland walked on board, wondering not a little at the change, as he thought there was some danger of the boat being stranded at low tide. Garx and Williams were evidently both away, so no immediate explanation was forthcoming.

McClelland searched the vessel for any trace of them, but found none. He was considerably surprised, however, in view of the strange position of the boat, to find the burners alight under the boilers, and, marveling over the happening, he procured a field-glass and changed his shoes.

While engaged in the latter operation he was startled by the voice of Garx calling out: "Now you set up the derrick, while I work on the pile."

McClelland sprang up and peered out. Garx was standing on the brow of the cliff and was looking inland. He was evidently addressing Williams, as McClelland soon heard the cook's voice in answer, but what he heard caused him to hastily conceal himself.

"All right, sir; but do you dinks we get 'way wiz gold zis night?" came the broken speech of Williams.

"I'm afraid not," answered Garx. "The stuff is heavy, you

know, and will take a lot of time to load, but then we have until to-morrow night to work in, so we have all the time in the world."

McClelland was speechless. The two men had found the gold! Besides, they were planning to steal the ship and leave the three others stranded in the wilds of Zululand. His first impulse was to hurry to his friends and warn them of the danger, but on second thought he perceived that it would be impossible to get away from the boat without attracting the attention of the two men on the cliff, and giving them a chance to escape, besides risking his own life. While he was thus debating what to do, the voices ceased, and presently he heard one of the men descending the cliff. Glancing out of the window he saw that it was Williams, and as he had not determined on any definite plan of action he grasped his revolver and crawled under the lower berth in the stateroom, to gain time to think.

Here he lay half an hour, much excited. McClelland was a rather nervous man when threatened with danger, but when thrown actually face to face with it he could fight as bravely as any man. So he huddled under the berth while the cook busied himself in the storeroom.

After awhile, McClelland conquered his fears and crept out. Obviously the thing to do was to take the man off his guard and disable him with a shot. He was just creeping nervously toward the door with this project in mind, when he heard a shout from the cliff. Garx had returned, and once more McClelland scuttled to his hiding place.

The cook climbed up the cliff to meet his partner in villainy. There was an animated dialogue for a few seconds, then a silence, after which began a hammering. McClelland concluded from this that Garx had gone back for another load, while Williams had commenced his work on the derrick.

After another long period of inaction on the part of McClelland and busy pounding on the part of Williams, with an occasional word from Garx as he returned every fifteen minutes with a load of treasure, the cook boarded the launch and again walked into the storeroom. McClelland knew it was time to act.

All the cabins were arranged serially upon the deck, with the pilot house in front, the galley and the storeroom about the middle,

the main saloon, where McClelland lay concealed, at the rear. All except the first three rooms had internal as well as external communication, so that it was possible to pass from the saloon to the men's quarters without once going outside. The doors were open between the saloon and the galley leading to the storeroom, and McClelland saw Williams moving about, preparing a place for the treasure.

Garx and Williams commenced to work the derrick, and McClelland, wedged behind the door of the saloon, watched the operation breathlessly. The great treasure that had cost so many lives came by bucket loads aboard the ship, and in his excitement he forgot the danger that threatened himself and his companions. To hear the millions come aboard, to feel the delicately balanced ship shift and tremble under the weight of it, and yet to realize that, unless he acted promptly, this enormous wealth, together with the ship, would soon be on the ocean in the sole possession of the two rascals, maddened the watching man. Yet the way out was not clear. Garx and Williams were both armed, and no opportunity occurred to deal with each separately in a way that would make it certain that he would win out in the struggle.

Again and again McClelland started forward, thinking the opportune moment had arrived, but each time he sprang back as the position of the conspirators altered so as to make his chance of success a hazardous one. And McClelland recognized the danger of taking the slightest odds.

It was well on towards sunset when the opportunity at last arrived. The treasure was nearly all aboard when Garx called out to Williams that he would climb to the top of the cliff and take a look around to see that everything was all right. The cook assented and continued his work in the storeroom, his back turned towards the watching McClelland.

This was the chance! When Garx had disappeared over the brow of the cliff, McClelland moved swiftly forward and before the cook was aware of his danger he was covered by a revolver.

"Hands up!" said McClelland. "Don't attempt to call out to your friend or you will get hurt."

Williams put his hands up slowly, and with neatness and despatch McClelland relieved him of his revolver and trussed him

with a piece of rope that had been used in lowering the treasure. The cook was a coward, and whimpered piteously when McClelland tied him to a ring in the corner.

"Now," said McClelland, "when Garx comes aboard I want you to call him, do you understand, you scoundrel? Call him in here, but don't say anything that will make him suspicious or you won't live long enough to regret it. Here he comes now, be careful!"

McClelland climbed up and took up a position on the saloon doorway, his revolver leveled at the trussed cook, whose frightened face peered out of the semi-darkness of the storeroom. Presently they heard Garx descending the cliff, and McClelland lifted his finger as a signal to the cook to hail his partner in deviltry.

"Garx," called the cook, "Garx, I want you."

"Louder," whispered McClelland.

"Garx! Garx! I want you."

The voice of the frightened Williams came up like a shriek.

"What is it?" called the other, hurrying across the gangplank, and rushing towards the storeroom.

McClelland moved his revolver to encourage his prisoner.

"I want you down here," whined the cook.

Garx dashed past the saloon door, behind which McClelland stepped, and then swung himself into the treasure chamber. Next minute this heavy door banged behind him and the two were prisoners in the same room with the enormous treasure of the ill-fated *Dorothea*.

When Bradstreet and Riders, who had become alarmed when McClelland did not return, reached the boat that evening, they found their companion smoking quietly on the hatch-way. They inquired about the others, and the smoker tapped the deck beneath his feet.

"I've got them down here," he answered, smiling, "and the treasure is keeping them company."

Garx made a full confession next morning. He had found the gold a year previous, and in company with three companions, who subsequently lost their lives when one of the Evans-Reese Syndicate boats was wrecked, he stored the treasure in a cave and

awaited an opportunity to seize a boat that could be managed by two men. The launch was an ideal craft, and he had followed from Durban with the purpose in his mind.

On the next day Bradstreet and McClelland finished the loading of the gold. The bullion was in little bricks, each covered with tightly sewn canvas, and it took them all the morning to get them aboard. That evening they started down the coast with tons of solid gold.

It was at the entrance to Durban harbor that Garx and Williams made their foolhardy attempt to escape. While the three were navigating the launch into the bay, the two prisoners managed to get free of their bonds, and leaped overboard. Night was falling, and in the darkness it was impossible to see the swimmers, but neither reached the shore.

The three treasure seekers found upon landing that they were not entitled by law to even a tenth part of the enormous wealth they had brought. Even the hundred thousand pounds promised in the document that Garx induced them to sign was not forthcoming, as the man had been discharged from the Salvage Syndicate some months before, and had no authority to make such a pledge. But the Company acted generously — they paid each of the three men one hundred thousand dollars.

And so the *Dorothea's* treasure was at last forwarded to its rightful owners, and peace reigned once more along the coast of Zululand.

The Mission of the Limp Man.*

BY MARY GARTON FOSTER.

HE old stone cottage occupied by Miss Judith Arnold and her sister Letitia stood a little back from one of the crooked streets of the English town of Deeping, its flower-bordered green-apron of a lawn supplying just the necessary touch of color to make it a complete picture.

Never did people more exactly match their home. Miss Judith — the elder by some years — was grim and old-fashioned, like the cottage, while Miss Letitia corresponded with the garden, being bright and fresh and attractive.

In all their lives, only once had a real disagreement ever arisen between these sisters. The occasion had been two years previous, when Mathew Dobbs — junior partner in the firm of Dobbs Bros., boot manufacturers of Deeping — on the eve of a sudden departure to Australia for an uncertain period, had written and boldly (Miss Judith said impertinently) proposed for the hand of Miss Letitia.

Miss Judith's circle of acquaintance being small and select, Mr. Dobbs was, personally, a stranger to her. This fact, together with a deep-rooted prejudice against "trade" in general, were the shoals destined to obstruct the course of true love for gentle Miss Letitia.

The subject had never since been alluded to — in words — between them, but its ghost rose at regular intervals in the shape of an innocent-looking letter, at sight of which Miss Judith's faded cheeks were wont to grow visibly paler, and Miss Letitia's pink ones a shade more roseate.

One morning, just after breakfast, the ghost made its appearance. It was a little before its usual time of visitation, and

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for once it passed unobserved by the elder sister, her attention being occupied with a letter of her own.

Mrs. Longstaff, the dressmaker, who had sewed for the Arnolds ever since Miss Letitia wore short frocks, and whose friendly interest extended far beyond her work, was employed that day remodeling one of Miss Judith's gowns, and as she plied her scissors she heard Miss Letitia sigh long and deeply, and knew the sigh was for the absent lover.

"Never mind, my dear," she said. "Everything will come round right, in time. Miss Judith will give way when the time comes."

Miss Letitia rose and softly closed the sewing-room door.

"Mrs. Longstaff, you can't think what a state of mind I'm in. I've had a letter this morning and he's on his way to England! He says he will insist upon a personal interview with Sister." If Miss Letitia had stated that her lover intended exposing himself to some deadly peril her voice could hardly have been more troubled. "I'm sure she'll never consent to meet him, and they're both so determined that I don't know what the consequence will be."

"The consequence will be, my dear," replied Mrs. Longstaff, in the tone of a judge rendering a final decision, "that you'll marry 'im, and you'll all be comfortable and 'appy together."

"Sh—" whispered Miss Letitia, and at that moment the door opened.

"Letitia, I should like to speak to you." It was Miss Judith's voice, and in response, the younger sister left the room and followed her to the library. Miss Judith was obviously disturbed about something, and Miss Letitia, slipping into a seat in the shadow of a tall bookcase, lifted Dizzy — the family cat — to her lap and waited for what was to come.

"I've had a letter from our agent," began Miss Judith, "and he writes that there are details in connection with our interests that require the presence of both of us in London for a few days."

Miss Letitia breathed a fluttering sigh of relief, but she was startled nevertheless. Never within her recollection had Miss Judith left the cottage for a night.

"How can we go — both of us?" she stammered.

"I've planned everything," answered her sister, "we need be away only one night. I've thought it out, and I've a plan that will insure the safety of the house against thieves. Listen, and give me your advice."

Miss Letitia knew quite well that when her sister reached the point of asking advice, her mind was firmly made up, so she silently waited for the disclosure of the plan which was that — in order that no one should be aware that the cottage was left unoccupied — the blinds be left raised, and the effigy of a man be placed where it could be seen in the front room.

"Where are you going to get the m — the effigy?" inquired Miss Letitia.

"We must make it. There's a suit of poor Papa's clothes in the camphorwood chest. After Mrs. Longstaff has gone home we'll get it out and — and prepare it."

Later in the day the program, as proposed by Miss Judith, was carried out. Sarah was of necessity taken into confidence, and assisted — with much secret enjoyment — in the preparation of the effigy which, when completed, was duly carried into the front room and placed in an armchair at the side of the fireplace.

"It looks that lifelike," announced Sarah, sent to observe the effect from outside — "that unbeknown, it would have given me a turn."

The plate closet was securely locked before they retired, and early the next morning, after providing food and drink in sufficient quantity for Dizzy's need, the sisters and their maid quietly left the cottage.

Shortly before tea-time next day an errand boy was called by a gentleman to carry a letter to the Arnold cottage, with orders to wait for a reply. Half an hour later he returned it undelivered, stating that although some one was in, for he could see "a deaf old party" sitting in the front room, he could get no response to his ring; upon which, his patron instructed him to report an hour later and go again.

Just as dusk was settling over the town Mrs. Longstaff passed through the cottage gate-way, but was brought suddenly

to a standstill by the unexpected sight of a boy standing at one of the low front windows, peering in.

"There's some'at wrong in yon room," he replied to Mrs. Longstaff's inquiry what he was up to. "Just afore tea-time a deaf old gent wor asittin' in a chair by the hearth; and now 'e's alyin' head down, o'er the chair's arm."

"Nonsense! you're mad!" Mrs. Longstaff's voice was loud and angry, but she peered in at the window herself, after vigorously ringing the bell.

Her strained sight could distinguish a dark mass at the fireplace, but its form could not be determined. The only sign of life was the plump shape of Dizzy, who appeared at the inside window-sill curving his body and rubbing his head in the friendliest manner against the pane, close to Mrs. Longstaff's face.

Mrs. Longstaff was mystified. She was familiar enough with the habits of the sisters to know that they rarely entertained a male visitor, but that the cottage was never left unoccupied.

Her talk with the messenger boy attracted the attention of the passers-by, and in a few minutes a small group had gathered. The boy's tale was repeated from one to another, and soon the neat flower bed beneath the windows was trampled down in vain efforts to satisfy curiosity by peering into the front room.

Mrs. Longstaff rose to the occasion.

"Run for the constable!" she said to the boy.

Reinforcements rapidly arriving, the group increased until the lawn was soon half covered by a curious, waiting throng.

A little later in the growing dusk three women came along the crooked street, from the direction of the railway station. At sight of the crowd upon the lawn they paused, and then the tall figure of Miss Judith advanced towards the steps, the two others following.

As the full realization of the situation came to Miss Judith, her consternation was too great for speech. She drew back toward the gate, followed by her sister and Sarah, and for a few seconds all three stood trembling in silence. A picture of the breaking open of the house; the finding of the effigy; the

scoffing of the rude, disappointed crowd, passed before her. The thought of the humiliation that would follow the disclosure of her innocent plan to protect the cottage was crushing.

"Here comes the constable!" shouted a voice from the crowd.

She felt the words to be the signal for the approach of the crisis of her abasement, and her pride rose to action. She moved quickly forward, and as the man reached the top of the steps leading from the street, she was beside him, with hand outstretched to detain him.

"I wish to speak to you a moment before —" she stopped, and then began again. "I wish to explain to you about — about —" but several of the crowd were at her elbow, and her voice failed.

The man stood looking at her, seemingly confused at sight of her agitation.

"I'm not —" he began, speaking slowly.

"You'll not have to break open the door," she interrupted. "Here's the key. But first, pray let me tell you about it."

"You're Miss Arnold?" The man lifted his hat, and something in his voice made Miss Judith feel that he was to be trusted.

Before she could again speak he put out one of his arms to keep the bystanders from too closely pressing, and with his other, drew her to his side, leading her, a moment later, beyond their hearing.

"What is it, Miss Arnold?" he asked, when they came to a standstill. "What do you wish to tell me?"

Miss Judith controlled herself, after an effort, and told the story in a few words.

The man gravely listened. If he saw any absurdity in the tale — if her method of protecting the cottage seemed to him at all novel — he uttered no word to betray it, and the dusk kindly drew its veil over any expression of his face.

"The crowd must be dispersed. They mustn't discover the facts," was his comment, when she had finished, and he mounted the front steps.

His darkly outlined figure could be clearly seen by all, and the buzz of voices in the garden ceased.

Slowly and distinctly, as if not unused to addressing an assemblage, he began:

"There has been a great mistake made. The impression prevailing that there is a man in the front room of this house is false. The ladies have been away for a few days, and some clothing which was left upon a chair by the fireplace has been seen through the window and magnified into the figure of a man. Kindly disperse, at once."

"The show's over!" exclaimed one of the watchers, and gradually the crowd emptied itself into the street.

Upon entering the house, Miss Judith, as though drawn thither by some mysterious influence, made straight for the front room. Mrs. Longstaff and Sarah followed, leaving Miss Letitia behind in the hall. When the blinds were lowered and the radiance of the lighted lamp filled the room, Mrs. Longstaff, with eager curiosity, turned toward the fireplace.

"Well," she ejaculated in an undertone, as Sarah raised the limp figure and restored it to its original position in the armchair, "he is a rum-looking customer, to be sure."

"Get the tea as quickly as possible, Sarah," Miss Judith said, sinking into a seat, while Dizzy — whose attempts at friendly familiarity with the effigy had played no small part in the drama of the afternoon — climbed upon her lap, purring a joyous welcome.

"Where's Letitia?" she questioned.

"Miss Letitia's — er — helping to get tea," Mrs. Longstaff stammered.

"I wish you would be kind enough to call her. Sarah can prepare tea without her assistance." Miss Judith's voice was recovering its natural tone.

Mrs. Longstaff bustled about several minutes before obeying. Several more minutes elapsed before she returned, accompanied by the younger sister.

Miss Letitia's eyes were bright and her cheeks very rosy. The excitement of the evening had evidently affected her differently from the way in which it had Miss Judith. As she glanced toward the motionless figure at the fireplace, two persistent dimples settled in the side of her face next the light.

"Letitia," anxiously inquired her sister, "has the gentleman gone yet?"

Miss Letitia looked about, as if not quite comprehending the question, and Mrs. Longstaff hastened to answer for her, —

"I think 'e's waiting about a bit till everything's quieted down, like."

"I wish to see him before he goes," said Miss Judith, "and apologize for my shocking mistake. In the excitement I thought he was the constable!"

There was a pause, during which Miss Letitia lifted Dizzy in her arms and laid her cheek against his soft fur.

"It was very embarrassing," the elder sister went on. "Only a gentleman could have taken in the situation and have come to my rescue, as he did. I can never be sufficiently grateful to him. I wonder who he is?"

"I don't think anybody thought of asking his name, there was such confusion." It was again Mrs. Longstaff who replied:

"That dreadful crowd!" Miss Judith closed her eyes, at the recollection. "Only for his tact and delicacy what humiliation we must have suffered! Mrs. Longstaff, will you see where he is? Ask him to come in. I must learn his name, for I may some day be able to show my appreciation of his kindness."

Miss Letitia dropped Dizzy as Mrs. Longstaff left the room. When the latter returned a few minutes later, ushering in the stranger, the younger sister was leaning over the silent figure at the fireplace.

"Here's the gentleman you wished to see, Miss Judith." There was suppressed excitement in Mrs. Longstaff's manner, and as the elder sister rose, with outstretched hand, to meet him, she went to the fireplace beside Miss Letitia.

The limp man in the chair became all at once an object of much attention. Miss Letitia changed the position, first of one arm and then of the other. She seemed oblivious of the stranger's entrance.

"I wish to thank the knight who so gallantly came to our rescue," began Miss Judith, in her most gracious manner.

"I am indeed happy to have been able to render you even so slight a service, Miss Arnold," replied the stranger, taking

her hand, but sending a quick glance in the direction of the group at the hearth. Miss Judith observed the glance.

"My sister also is desirous of thanking you," she said, adding in a playful manner as she turned toward the effigy, "This is the man who brought all the trouble upon us. Letitia, this is — pardon me," — Miss Judith looked questioningly at the stranger, "I'm in ignorance of your name." But his attention was so fixed on the fireplace that he did not seem to hear. Miss Letitia was stooping to turn the figure in the chair. One arm was supporting its shoulders, and her face was in the shadow.

An uncomfortable silence fell upon the group — uncomfortable for Miss Judith, eager to express her gratitude, and annoyed at her sister's seeming indifference.

"Letitia," she said, a little more firmly. This time the younger sister looked up, her face all in a glow, and Miss Judith began to feel vaguely puzzled.

"Pardon me," she again began, looking now full at the stranger, "but your name — "

"Miss Arnold," he interposed. He bent and took her hand in both of his, "I wish to introduce myself — er — the fact is, I was about to call on you — and your sister — this afternoon, when — er — our friend here — precipitated matters." Just then the limp man dropped his head on his breast.

"I don't — think — I — quite — understand," Miss Judith slowly said. Her glance traveled from the fine, kindly face at her side to the figure in the chair. Miss Letitia hastened to raise the bowed head to its proper position again, and then drew near the two standing hand in hand, a tender light in her gentle face.

The truth dawned on Miss Judith at last. Her face flushed, but she did not withdraw her hand from the firm, friendly clasp in which it lay. With her left arm she reached and drew Miss Letitia's head to her shoulder, and as she bent to kiss the happy face there were tears in both pairs of eyes.

And behind them, Mrs. Longstaff, for want of something better to do, hugged the effigy.

Morini's Orinoco Cuckoos.*

BY E. F. POWER.

A SMALL round table supporting a wicker cage stood in the middle of the stage, and inside the cage were three birds, about the size of pigeons and of a bluish white color. On the program they were mentioned as "Morini's Orinoco Cuckoos" and the audience watched them attentively. Morini's widely advertised bird act had been awaited with eager anticipation at The Columbia.

One man in the great audience was particularly interested. This was Professor Murray, the famous ornithologist, who occupied a front seat in the orchestra circle. He knew that all authorities agreed that the Orinoco Cuckoo could not be trained, or even domesticated, yet the announcements stated that the three birds would perform feats that would be impossible for even a trained canary. The professor was in a state of evident excitement as he awaited the appearance of the bird trainer.

Morini soon made his entrance. He was a small, dapper man, wearing over his evening dress a loose Inverness coat, and carrying in his hand a small gilt wand which he twirled awkwardly as he stepped to the footlights to address the waiting audience.

His speech was brief, but to the point. He explained that he had succeeded, after months of laborious work, in arousing the reasoning faculties of the three birds so that he could control their flight by word. They would fly in any direction the audience wished and come back to him at his call.

"They are known as the Orinoco Cuckoo," he added, smiling as he moved towards the cage, "but I call them the Boomerang Bird because they always come back to me."

Opening the cage, he placed one of the three on the wand and stepped to the footlights, the cuckoo remaining perfectly quiet.

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The audience now saw that the bird carried upon its breast a bright heart-shaped medal suspended from a thin chain placed around the neck. Morini explained that the three performers were so alike that he had adopted this method of distinguishing them apart, each medal bearing a different number.

"Now," continued the bird trainer, "I want some one to say in what direction he would like bird number one to fly."

There was silence for a moment, and then a boy in the gallery shouted: "Aw, send him up here to me — an' den get him back if youse kin."

A laugh ran through the audience, and Morini, smiling pleasantly, gently tossed the cuckoo from his wand and, pointing at the boy in the gallery, called out: "Fly up there."

The order had scarcely been given when the bird flew slowly but directly towards the youngster. With outstretched necks and expressions of astonishment the audience noted its flight. Here was a phenomenon that they had never witnessed before. The bird was obeying verbal instructions in a way that amazed the most indifferent.

When the cuckoo was within a few feet of the boy's outstretched hand Morini called sharply: "Stop!" Instantly the bird paused in its flight and remained suspended on beating wings. It was evident to the astonished spectators that it was entirely under the control of its owner. After the cuckoo fluttered in this position for a few seconds Morini commanded: "Come back," and the audience received new evidence of the bird's intelligence. It turned instantly and flying swiftly back to the stage alighted on the wand held out to it.

Professor Murray thought rapidly while the audience applauded. Morini had accomplished the marvelous. With apparent ease he had performed something that every authority on bird life had pronounced impossible. Text books on ornithology were being blown to the winds by the actions of the little man in the Inverness overcoat.

The other two birds even excelled the performance of the one that had flown to the gallery. They started, wheeled, paused, circled, and returned, as Morini repeated the wishes of the audience, who tested the obedience of the cuckoos in every possible way.

Morini himself never suggested in what direction they should fly — he was simply the mouthpiece of his astonished spectators. At Professor Murray's own suggestion one of the birds had come to him and alighted on his shoulder, and the miracle appeared greater than ever.

The professor left the theatre pondering deeply. The performance was a marvelous one. He had witnessed something that all his knowledge and experience had led him to believe was impossible, and he did not feel comfortable at finding his preconceived ideas shattered.

On the following evening Professor Murray, armed with an opera-glass, never kept his eyes off the birds and their trainer, but he did not discover the slightest evidence of trickery. His incredulous mind had caused him to particularly watch the wand, but this slight suggestion of fraud was swept away when Morini, in the final stage of the act, entirely discarded the little gilt rod, lifted the birds from their cage with his hand, and directed their flight with a finger.

In the weeks that followed the Orinoco Cuckoos added nightly to their fame. Other ornithologists besides Murray came to witness and wonder, but although the doings of Morini were opposed to all their teachings they could not explain the mystery. While insisting that the cuckoos could not be trained to understand human speech, they were forced in the next breath to admit that Morini had accomplished the miraculous.

Professor Murray sought the acquaintance of the little man at The Columbia, but the latter had no information to give beyond that which he nightly imparted to his big audiences. Every attempt to probe the means by which he obtained the strange power over the cuckoos was met with the one reply that it was only by months of arduous labor that he had made the birds obey his commands. The statements of ornithologists the little man met with smiles. He was combatting arguments with acts, and Murray recognized that Morini had the advantage.

The Orinoco Cuckoos were beginning their seventh week at The Columbia when Professor Murray, still brooding over the unsolved mystery, received word that his friend, Doctor Alfred Farraday, the noted scientist, had that day arrived unexpectedly from

Paris. With this message came an inspiration. He would, without commenting upon the mysterious performance, invite the distinguished Frenchman to witness it in the hope that his eye or brain might suggest a solution of the seeming bewitchment of the birds.

Eight o'clock found the two at The Columbia. The curtain rose, and Morini had not reached the footlights when Farraday started violently and gripped the arm of his companion. "Come with me," he whispered excitedly, and fairly pulled Murray towards the door. Upon reaching the foyer he demanded, trembling with agitation, that a policeman be summoned. In company with the officer the two men made their way to the rear of the stage, where they awaited the conclusion of Morini's act. As the bird trainer, still bowing to the applauding house, stepped behind the scenes, he collided with the trio. "Arrest that man," cried Farraday. "He was my valet and I have searched Europe to find him." As the officer stepped forward the excited Doctor continued: "I invented an electric battery that so controls the waves of magnetic force as to move a metallic object at will within a radius of a thousand feet. This scoundrel stole the battery and by its aid controls the flight of those birds. His wand or finger ring is attached to the battery, which he carries concealed under his coat, and the metal discs attached to the birds establish the connection."

And thus it came to pass that on that eventful evening the Orinoco Cuckoos regained their liberty while their master lost his!

Wanted—A Proverb.*

BY LEROY WALLINGFORD.

IT was Fernley who undertook the regeneration of Morrison. Fernley pursued new breakfast foods and the simple life, but he carried enough proverbs to fit any situation that stumbling humanity might get into. On this account Morrison attracted him. The majority of the proverbs appear to have been specially constructed for people who dig the hard rows in this life, and it looked as if Morrison was wrestling with a Panama Canal with only a blunt garden hoe to help him along.

The other clerks in Aaronstein's pitied Morrison, but they did not bother to acquaint him of the fact. They had a dim idea that pity and advice are poor things to offer a man who is wrestling with a heavy-weight drink craving, but Fernley thought different. He had tremendous faith in his proverbs. He loaded himself with them each morning, and he became a sort of human Gatling that fired adages at Morrison every time that unfortunate got within hearing range.

"The darkest hour is that before the dawn," he would whisper as he tiptoed up to Morrison's desk to collect the sale slips. Then, as the thirsty one handed him the bundle, he would add: "'It's a long lane that has no turning,' and always remember 'That the Lord helps those who help themselves.'"

Morrison was inclined to think that his lane ran in a circle, and he had big doubts whether Providence would cooperate with him as Fernley suggested, but he allowed the proverb-pounder to fire away without interruption.

It was on the days immediately preceding pay day that Morrison's condition became especially noticeable. At this time of the week the saloon exercised a greater pulling power than the

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restaurants, and as Morrison was performing financial handsprings in an endeavor to make cup and lip meet as often as possible till he received his pay, his physique suffered as well as his morals.

Then an idea came to Fernley. He tried to induce Morrison to buy a commuter's ticket at the restaurant so that he would be protected against hunger when the drink craving ransacked the treasury in the latter part of the week. It was good of Fernley. He picked out the weightiest of his proverbs, and morning and night he flung "The Lord helps those who help themselves" argument at the head of the suffering one. The drink demon within Morrison objected strongly to the prepayment of three dollars for food, but Fernley was insistent. He urged Morrison to make a fight; to stand up and let the Almighty see that he was in the ring, and finally the sufferer consented.

Fernley was delighted. Pay day came on the following Saturday, and lest the devil might obtain a jiu-jitsu grip on the morally weak one, he corralled his man the moment he was paid, and he never stopped bolstering him with the proverb that urged heavenly cooperation till Morrison paid over three dollars to the Teetotaler's Café and received in exchange a red ticket entitling him to twenty-one meals. Fernley once more administered the proverb in solemn tones, and then satisfied that he had outwitted the devil he walked gaily homeward.

On that evening Morrison's drink demon held high festival. It claimed the money remaining after his room and food had been paid for, and Morrison spent it freely, but he kept a firm grip on his meal ticket.

Monday morning when Fernley reached the office, he saw Morrison sitting with his head bowed in utter dejection, and surprised at the other's attitude he stepped quietly over and tapped him on the shoulder. Morrison lifted his head and two bloodshot eyes stared accusingly at the proverb pounder.

"The Lord helps those," began Fernley, but Morrison stopped him with an angry gesture. Fernley was astonished.

Morrison tried to speak, but his dry tongue refused to mold the words, so he grasped his pen, wrote rapidly and pushed the sheet across to Fernley, who read these words:

"The Teetotaler's Café burned to the ground yesterday morning, and my three-dollar commuter's ticket isn't worth a tinker's damn!"

As Fernley finished reading Morrison gained the use of his tongue.

"If you've got a proverb that I can swap for a sandwich, trot it out. I haven't tasted food for twenty-four hours."

Fernley — well, for once Fernley couldn't find a proverb.

A Desert Episode.*

BY GLEN D. HURST.

THE setting for the last chapter in the life of Old Man Murphy was the heart of the Nevada desert; the time — the exhilarating but turbulent spring season of the year 190—.

The old man stood in the door of his cabin on the side of a rugged desert range, and in troubled spirit he gazed at a group of strangers moving about in apparent excitement on the light colored porphyry foothills that lay between him and the gray, parched flat in the deceptive distance. It was only at long intervals during more than a generation since the old man had lived alone in that cabin that any one disturbed his solitude, and this sudden invasion he resented. He had prospected and mined in a desultory way for so many years unmolested that he felt a sort of proprietorship in the surrounding country.

The time was, when he welcomed his fellows to the desert domain, but it was now long past. When he located the "Atlantic Cable" and "Nova Scotia" silver lode claims he felt that his long search for riches had been successful. Under the stimulus of visionary wealth his mind's eye saw swarms of treasure seekers burrowing in the hills about him and his own claims yielding bonanza. Then it was, he invited the whole world to share his discovery and good fortune. However, the small silver ledge attracted little attention and the district was deserted except for Murphy, who worked his own vein and never guessed the real secret of the hills over which he prowled.

The years went by and Old Man Murphy, growing more grizzled and bent, became morose and cared less and less for the society of his kind. As a young man he had left friends and family behind and joined the fortune hunters in the far-off western

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desert. Then he had every hope of returning soon with wealth abundant. His failure galled his pride. The years of brooding alone created a strange antagonism toward contact with his fellows.

Old Man Murphy watched in silence the activity on the hills below till he saw one of the strangers coming up the trail toward him. That was too much. He turned into the cabin with muttered imprecations on the intruders.

The stranger had come with friendly intention. He told a story of a great find, one that would have thrilled the old man had he heard it twenty years before. A shallow trench across the peak of one of the yellow hills had opened a vein of picture rock, literally sparkling with crystals of gold. Murphy merely glanced at the glittering sample of ore offered in proof and turned away, grumbling about the invasion of his district. The next day he packed his scraggy cayuses with provisions and disappeared in the direction of Excelsior range where he could be alone for a while.

Worn out with tramping about the mountains Old Man Murphy returned in a few weeks to his cabin on the "Atlantic Cable." During his absence a wonderful change had come over the district. All around him for miles prospectors were locating every foot of ground. Near the site of the original gold discovery a town to shelter thousands was building. The explosions of giant powder charges blasting the rock in a hundred shafts and tunnels kept up a continual roar. Miners dodged about in the smoke and dust, showing each other specimens of gold be-sprinkled quartz. From his eminence Murphy could count half a hundred automobiles, loaded with passengers, speeding in clouds of dust and sand along the three new trails through the sage-brush, all converging in the new camp.

The old man contemplated the change with heavy heart. His solitude was a thing of the past. A trespass he was powerless to stop was upon him.

A monument of rough stones newly placed on his claims caught his eye. He strode over to it and read the location notice in anger. With a vicious kick he tumbled the pile and tore the notice to shreds. Returning to his cabin, he loaded both bar-

rels of his shotgun and took a position commanding a view of the razed monument and the two trespassing prospectors, who were working in a newly started tunnel, unmindful of the old man's presence.

"You fellers git off my claim. Don't ye know I've had this ground fer thirty year. Git — if ye know what's good fer ye,' he shouted hoarsely, much excited. The prospectors left their work to face the big gun leveled at them. They protested, argued and threatened, but Murphy's manner was menacing and his fingers twitched nervously on the trigger. They were compelled to retreat.

The prospectors made several efforts to get possession of the claim and replace their monuments, always to be met by the big shotgun and the old man behind it, who kept on constant guard duty.

When provisions ran low, rather than lend encouragement to the bountifully stocked stores of the new camp, Murphy made a night drive to an isolated trading post some twenty miles away.

Late one afternoon Murphy sat with the gun across his knees guarding his claim. Away in the distance along the route of one of the new trails there appeared a gang of workmen. His attention was attracted by the line of telegraph poles they were erecting. That evening he sat long in the darkness musing intently, and the next morning he put away the gun, fastened his cabin door, and skirting the camp was soon tramping at his best pace through the sand toward the line of poles. He spent the day trailing along with the construction gang.

A new Murphy came back to the cabin that evening.

The prospectors had taken advantage of his absence to replace the monument he had destroyed.

"Let 'em have it. Let 'em have it," he mused when he saw what had been done. He scrawled a few lines to the "boys," telling them they would be bothered no more and to go on with their work, and placed the note where they would easily find it.

As regularly and persistently as he had stayed on guard duty during the preceding days, Murphy now followed along with the line builders, watching every movement in the construction work. He stepped off the distance between poles, observed the

number set each day, and in the twilight, in his cabin, he figured the number of days till camp would be reached. Each evening he checked off the day's progress, chuckling happily to himself if the work had gone better than usual or feeling depressed if some accident had been the cause of delay.

The work entered the limits of the new camp, which the old man had always avoided, but he gave no attention to the activity on every hand. Scores of passenger automobiles wheeled by with a rush, and freight wagons loaded with provisions for 7,000 gold hunters passed him unnoticed. A fuse hissed almost at his feet, and the explosion that shook the ground and sent a shower of stony missiles flying around him uncovered a vein of gold-laden quartz. A hundred eager-eyed men gathered to view the new discovery. The old man was pushed aside roughly, but he seemed not to care. He was watching the last pole as it was reared in the air and straightening up became rigid under the tamping. The crowds that filled the gambling palaces or jammed the streets and talked of rich strikes and mills and dreamed of millions, he passed through as though they were phantoms.

Let them dream of millions; what mattered it to Old Man Murphy. Had he not a dream of his own?

The last strand of wire was strung. The click of the sounder as the key closed told the initiated that all was finished. The operator was taking his place at the table when Old Man Murphy pushed through the crowd that filled the new office and leaning over the operator uttered an appeal that was backed by the longing of his whole soul.

"Boy, let me send the first one?"

The operator stared at the flushed face incredulously, then into the deep-set, now brilliant, appealing eyes. Scarcely knowing why, he answered the old man by stepping back. Murphy flung himself into the operator's seat and placed his fingers on the transmission key. The dispatch to be sent first lay open before him. It read:

> *"Crosscut on Baloon hill claim opened up four feet of high-grade assaying into the thousands. Withdraw offer of sale."*

With hesitation and an uncertain "send" the old man commenced:

.— — .. — — . . . . —.

It was not the message before him. The operator looked worried. He advanced one hand towards the instrument to stop the old man, then as the message became coherent he listened intently. The receiving operator at the other end of the wire was puzzled to get this message:

"— will prove an additional link between the nations whose friendship is founded upon their common interest and reciprocal esteem."

Now the old man's fingers were tingling with the electric impulse of the instrument; as if by magic the old touch came back. He began the transmission of the copy before him. It went over the wire with the speed and precision of an expert. He labored under an inward excitement, a mystery to the onlookers. With a steady hand he sent dispatch after dispatch until the accumulated pile was exhausted. With the last click he opened the key and turned to the crowd, triumph and satisfaction in every feature of the rugged, time-worn face.

"Boys," he said, "this is a great day — a great day fer the desert — an' fer me. How I hated to see you fellers come, — but I didn't know ye was goin' to bring this — I didn't know it. I've been holdin' down a claim in this district fer near thirty years, boys — I'm kind o' shriveled up body an' soul bein' here so much alone an' I wanted to be let alone till the end," then he addressed the operator.

"Ye thought somethin' was wrong when I sent out that first message didn't ye? This desert has laid between me an' that message fer forty years. It's a long time, boys, since I was counted on as one of the best operators in the country. That was in the late fifties when the telegraph was new. I was so good at operatin' that when the first cable was laid I was put in th' service. That was a great day too fer me, an' I relayed that message from Queen Victoria to the President. It was the first one sent across. A few years afterward I got th' gold

fever an' I've been on the desert ever since, but I never forgot that message and I just had to send it out first to get my bearin's. An' to think this thing has followed me and found me in the desert after forty years."

The excitement that sustained the old man was passing.

"But now I'm glad ye come. I'm satisfied, boys — I'm satisfied."

The eyes dulled, the lips twitched in an effort to speak, and the head drooped. Old Man Murphy was seized with a paralysis — a paralysis of death.

"CATECHISMS"

Hand to Mouth Hints for those who thirst for the Milk of Human Kindness, and Heart to Heart Talks that will lead them from the Wrong Road into the Right Path.

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I have heard of short girls making themselves longer by the use of high heels, chair cushions, and foot stools, but is there any way that a long girl can make herself shorter? Being almost two heads taller than any of my friends I am so mortified that I dare not give any dinner parties because I must either run the risk of getting my extremities all tangled up with those of guests next or opposite to me or sit so far from the table as to spill food into my lap. — FRANCES.

In the best society one overcomes the difficulty as follows: — In the floor in front of your chair cut a hole twelve by eighteen inches. Over this opening cut the rug on three sides, thus forming a flap, which is kept down with a ball and socket fastener when not in use. In seating yourself at the table carelessly stoop down and under the pretence of picking up a pin, unbutton the flap with deft fingers and permit your feet to dangle in space. In case the limbs are of such lavish length as to project into the cellar a swinging foot rest with a hot water bottle should be provided there during the winter months.

My Sunday School class want me to tell them an original fish story. Will you suggest one that points a moral? — ALBERTA.

Here is one that points two morals. One Sunday morning in October, while Mrs. Araminta Kerflum of Googe Hill, Maine, was preparing the usual breakfast of beans, she told her husband Tobias of a strange vision she had during the previous night. Some one, she dreamt, had that very Sunday evening presented her with a string of fine trout, and at last her long cherished wish that for once in her life she might eat her fill of fresh fish was to be realized. This reminded her husband of a strange dream he had had. Awakened by the thunder, he sat up in bed, he said, and looking in the direction of Wild River during a vivid flash of lightning, he saw that *it rained fish!* He distinctly recalled seeing live brook trout mingling in mid air with the falling torrents. To his wife's hint that he must have lost his mind coming home from lodge meeting he replied that perhaps he had and that he had a mind to go out after breakfast with hook and line and look for it. Araminta, being a God-fearing woman, suggested that he better leave his fish basket at home or folks would talk about desecrating the Sabbath. And thus it came to pass that Tobias Kerflum went fishing and Araminta Kerflum went to church. After explaining to the congregation that her husband couldn't come as he had gone in search of something he had lost, Araminta prayed that Tobias might have good luck. That night when the husband returned his coat pockets bulged out like toy balloons. Not until he had proudly placed twenty-seven speckled beauties on a platter before her did Araminta find speech to exclaim, "Praised be he!" "But look!" she added excitedly, "this one is still alive." The words had hardly passed her lips when the largest trout wriggled himself free from his dead companions and right before their eyes leaped to the clock shelf where he complacently began eating an apple that laid there. With bulging

eyes the Kerflums stood speechless watching these antics. Suddenly the husband recalled that he did not catch this trout like the others, in the river with hook and line, but picked him up with his hand while passing through Cy Gammon's orchard in Hell's Half Acre. A peculiar noise in the grass having attracted his attention, he was astonished to find a fish quietly munching an apple. Tobias was sure that it was this identical trout because of a small scar resembling the letter H he bore on his back. As Araminta and her husband stepped toward the shelf to examine the scar the trout winked slyly and looked so cunning and heart hungry that they decided then and there not to eat him, but to adopt him as a pet. The childless couple soon became greatly attached to the little fellow who, although persistently avoiding water, thrived on his favorite diet of apples. Perched high and dry on table, bureau, or the melodeon, as he disposed of juicy Winesaps and Baldwins, he proved a constant joy to his benefactors. Early the following spring while Tobias was sitting on the piazza one day, waiting for dinner, he heard his dog bark at a woodchuck in a stone wall near by. In going to his assistance he noticed, as he was about to cross a small stream bridged by a thin sapling, that his pet trout which had followed him turned hurriedly back towards the house. That was the last time the trout was seen alive. After killing the woodchuck Tobias ate his dinner and then went out on the piazza to enjoy a smoke. He searched high and low, but found neither his pipe which he had left there nor the trout. Finally he walked slowly back to the stream where he had last seen his pet and eagerly scanned every foot of ground, but without success. Just as he was about to give up he glanced into the water and his heart stood still at what he saw. There at the bottom of the little pool was his pipe and near it lay the trout, dead. The thoughtful little pet, having noticed that his master had forgotten his pipe, had gone back after it and in trying to cross the stream on the sapling to restore it to him he had slipped, fallen into the water and drowned! Thus endeth the first lesson. Three months later, when Cy Gammon heard of this remarkable fish, he explained that during the summer before Tobias Kerflum picked up his apple trout it rained so little in Hell's Half Acre that the wells and streams went dry and a water famine prevailed. When Gammons' well threatened to dry up he decided to save the life of the one trout which had kept it free from angle worms, so he lowered his little nephew Hankey Mix in a bucket and asked him to bring up the trout and place him in one of the barrels of water Cy had prudently stored in the cellar. Five weeks later, when the heavy rain set in, Gammon requested Hankey to take the trout in half a bucket of water and transfer him to the little brook near by, which empties into Wild River. It was then discovered that Hankey, instead of depositing the trout in the barrel of water five weeks previously had placed him in a barrel of cider, where he grew to almost twice his former size. Having become accustomed to cider he entirely lost his taste for water and acquired a craving for apples because of the liquid they contained. Before transferring the trout to the stream Hankey, with the aid of a pin, scratched his initial on its back. Now one moral of this story is "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." The other is "Beware of strong drink."